

## Message Text

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12  
ACTION EA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSC-01 PM-03 NSC-05 SP-02 SS-15 CIAE-00

DODE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00 PA-01 USIA-06 PRS-01 /052 W  
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R 170510Z JUN 75  
FM AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2838  
INFO AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR

C O N F I D E N T I A L SINGAPORE 2618

E.O. 11652: GDS  
TAGS: PINT, SN  
SUBJECT: DR. TOH RELINQUISHES EDUCATION PORTFOLIO

REF: SINGAPORE 2408

1. PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE ANNOUNCED JUNE 14 THAT  
DR. TOH CHIN CHYE HAS ASKED TO BE RELIEVED OF HIS FORMAL  
RESPONSIBILITY OVER THE EDUCATION MINISTRY. THE OFFICIAL  
STATEMENT SAID DR. TOH WISHED TO CONCENTRATE ON THE MINISTRY  
OF HEALTH WHERE THERE WAS NO MINISTER OF STATE TO ASSIST  
HIM. THE ANNOUNCEMENT NOTED THAT THE NEWLY APPOINTED  
SENIOR MINISTER OF STATE FOR EDUCATION, CHAI CHONG YIL,  
WOULD CONSULT THE PRIME MINISTER WHO "RETAINS FORMAL  
CHARGE OF THE PORTFOLIO UNTIL OTHER ARRANGEMENTS ARE MADE."

2. COMMENT: THIS FURTHER ADJUSTMENT OF THE CABINET  
FOLLOWING THE RESHUFFLE OF JUNE 2 COMPLETELY REMOVES  
DR. TOH FROM THE FIELD OF EDUCATION. DR. TOH MAY HAVE  
DISCOVERED IN THE LAST TWO WEEKS THAT IT WAS IN FACT  
INTENDED THAT HE EXERCISE ONLY NOMINAL CONTROL OVER THE  
EDUCATION MINISTRY AS THE JUNE 2 ANNOUNCEMENT STATED, OR ELSE  
HE MAY HAVE HAD GROWING DOUBTS WHETHER THE ARRANGEMENT WAS WORKABLE.  
DR. TOH IS AN  
EXTREMELY AUTOCRATIC INDIVIDUAL WHO WOULD  
FIND IT DIFFICULT TO BE IN "NOMINAL" CONTROL  
OF ANYTHING. UNDER THE CIRCUMSTANCES, HE PROBABLY DECIDED  
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IT MADE MORE SENSE TO GIVE IT UP ALTOGETHER. THIS

DEVELOPMENT NOT ONLY CONFIRMS DR. TOH'S CONSIDERABLE LOSS OF POWER AND POSITION, BUT ALSO SERVES TO GIVE CHAI CHONG YII A FREER HAND IN RUNNING THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION.

3. MEANWHILE IT IS UNCLEAR WHETHER THE PRIME MINISTER INTENDS TO APPOINT A NEW MINISTER OF EDUCATION OR TO HOLD THE EDUCATION PORTFOLIO HIMSELF FOR AN INDEFINITE PERIOD WHILE GIVING CHAI CHONG YII AN OPPORTUNITY TO SHOW WHAT HE CAN DO. THE LATTER COURSE SEEMS THE MORE LIKELY AT THIS POINT.  
GRANT

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## Message Attributes

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**Disposition Approved on Date:**  
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**Disposition Case Number:** n/a  
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**Disposition Date:** 28 MAY 2004  
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**TAGS:** PGOV, SN, (TOH CHIN CHYE), (CHAI CHONG YII)  
**To:** STATE  
**Type:** TE  
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